

# Conform to HIS Image

## Roman 8:29

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Paul founded the church at Thessalonica after he responded to the Macedonian call (Acts 16, 17:1-9). Thessalonica was one of the major metropolitan cities of Macedonia. During that time there was much persecution from both Jews and the Gentiles.

One of the major reasons Paul wrote to the Thessalonians was to help the believers to be grounded in the faith and to teach the doctrine of the Second Coming of Christ, which is the hope of every Christian.

The teaching of the Second Coming of Christ strongly emphasises a holy lifestyle. This is the way that prepares us to be ready for Christ's coming at any time.

Paul also wrote to correct some false teachings about the doctrine of Christ's Second Coming. He exhorted the believers to work hard and not be lazy because some were using the coming of Christ as an excuse to become lazy and indifferent to the responsibilities of life.

"We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brothers loved by God that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You become imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia – your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus, who rescued us from the coming wrath." (1 Thessalonians 1:2-10 NIV)

Paul very clearly points out some facts about who is a Christian. He mentions four fundamental truths about a Christian.

### **Chosen By God** (1 Thessalonians 1:4)

Every Christian is chosen by God. When He saved you, He chose you to be His. Salvation is a gift. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). When Jesus prayed to the Father, He said "... They were yours; you gave them to me..." (John 17:6) and again Paul said "But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

There is evidence of our salvation as we can see in 1 Thessalonians 1:3). Every Christian who is chosen of God will have these three spiritual qualities: Your work will be produced by faith, your labour will be prompted by love and endurance will be inspired by hope.

The salvation of God will bring changes in our lives. The work of faith concerns your turning to God from idols (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Faith always leads to works. Your labour is prompted by love when you serve the living and true God. Your endurance is inspired by the hope that Jesus will come again (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Those whom God chooses, He changes! This does not mean that they are perfect, but they are being made perfect.

### **Imitators of God** (1 Thessalonians 1:5-7)

In spite of severe suffering and persecution, the church at Thessalonica welcomed Paul's message with great joy. Because of this they became a model to all other believers (1 Thessalonians 1:6, 7) you too must be imitators of God. Paul challenged them to imitate him because he was an imitator of Jesus (1 Thessalonians 1:6a). When people observe you, they see Jesus. Worldly people will not read the Bible, but they can "read" you. As you imitate the Lord, they will know Him through you. When Jesus called his disciples, He said: "Follow Me." Do we dare believers to follow us? We can, only if we ourselves are following Christ.

### **Evangelism** (1 Thessalonians 1:8-9)

"The Lord's messages rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia – your faith in God has become known everywhere..." (1 Thessalonians 1:8a). Not only did the believers receive the Word but they communicated it very well. They were evangelists. It was like the blowing of the trumpet. They proclaimed God's Word everywhere. This is the responsibility of all who have been chosen of God and are and are imitators of God to be His witnesses. We must testify of God's love and grace. The Bible says: "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!" We ought to share about Jesus every where we go.

### **A People of Hope** (1 Thessalonians 1:10 and 2:19)

1 Thessalonians 2:19 says "For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of the Lord Jesus when he comes?" 1 Thessalonians 1:10 also says: "And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead – Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath." The word "wait" here means "waiting with patience and confidence." It is not idleness, waiting of time and being lazy. Jesus said, "Occupy till I come" and "Work while it is day." We should be a people of hope.

Otherwise, you will live defeated lives. The greatest hope in life is not just to have what the world can offer you, but to know and believe that Jesus Christ, our King, is coming back very soon for us.

Let us not allow persecution or hardship to destroy our faith in Jesus Christ. But let us allow God's Word to strengthen us for He has chosen us. Christians, let us be imitators of God, witnesses from Him and live our lives with the hope of Christ's soon return. "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Galatians 6: 9, 10).

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CALVARY NEWS

Issue 43 January – February 1997